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2003 Session Report

Dear Neighbors:

The 2003 session is in high gear, and the Legislature is on a fast track pursuing solutions to the challenges facing our state. Like many states, Washington is dealing with a significant budget shortfall. The Legislature is facing many difficult decisions in the coming months, but that also brings opportunity for positive and needed change.

I believe our \$2.7 billion budget deficit provides our state government with that opportunity. Seizing it will set the stage for better service delivery and stronger communities.

Everything we do during the 2003 session, from building our state's budgets, to considering education issues and working on our transportation crisis, must have one common goal - to rebuild our economy and bring jobs to Washington families.

This session, in addition to serving on the Higher Education Committee, I've accepted additional responsibilities. I've been appointed assistant ranking Republican on the Transportation and the Local Government committees. I look forward to being at the table when we craft legislation dealing with the important issues considered by these committees.

In addition, I have also been appointed to the House Rules Committee. Members of the Rules Committee decide whether a bill will be considered by the entire membership of the House. These new responsibilities will help me address the issues 41st District citizens have identified as priorities.

I am excited to represent you in our Legislature, and committed to be a part of the solution to our state's problems, focusing on adopting policies that provide results for Washington citizens.

As always, I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Representative Fred Jarrett

Building state budgets – no longer business as usual

I am very encouraged by Gov. Locke's new "Priorities of Government" budget. The process of identifying priorities first and building the state's budget based on those priorities represents an entirely new way of doing business. I consider this to be the biggest step forward in state budgeting since the era of progressive reforms.

A business-as-usual approach would have begun with the existing budget and focused on cutting programs until spending was reduced to match revenue. Instead, we should start with available revenue and assume no spending commitments. Then decide "what to buy" in order to deliver results that matter most to the citizens of Washington. This is truly a results-based budgeting process.

The governor's budget proposal is just a starting point in the process. The responsibility of developing the state's budget is now with the Legislature. I hope we will use the governor's proposal as a baseline, and a tool to debate what we, as a state, should be buying with taxpayer dollars. From there we can build a responsible budget that will meet the needs of Washington citizens. In doing so, I believe citizens will witness improved state services, and more importantly, make strides in rebuilding the trust of the people through demonstrated results.

Creating a transportation plan the people will support

When voters turned down Referendum 51, they didn't say no to improving our state's transportation system. Rather, they said, overwhelmingly, that they want to see results and accountability before supporting new revenues.

During the second week of session, members of the House Republican Caucus introduced a transportation reform, construction, and funding package that is a dramatic shift away from recent proposals.

Please email me at jarrett_fr@leg.wa.gov if you are interested in receiving regular legislative updates on the issues being considered during the 2003 session.

The package is focused on adopting five specific reforms before increasing transportation investment. Once a reform has been signed into law a penny tax increase would be adopted, leading to a potential five-cent gas tax increase. It would raise about \$2.5 billion in bonds for roads and highways. Specifically, the package proposes:

- Streamlining the state's permitting processes so good projects, projects delivering better transportation and environmental solutions to communities, get built faster and at less cost
- Removing barriers to providing passenger-only ferry service;
- Requiring comprehensive performance audits of the Department of Transportation
- Giving private firms an opportunity to win contracts for WSDOT work
- Making the prevailing wage for road projects reflect actual labor conditions.

The House Republican plan is an excellent place to begin the dialogue on improving our state's transportation system. We will have to work across party lines and with our colleagues in the Senate to get any transportation improvements started. But, putting a proposal on the table this early in the session gives us plenty of time to hear from you, allow the Legislature to have a healthy debate on the issue, and then create a well thought-out plan Washington citizens will support.

2003 Legislative Calendar

- ***Monday, Jan. 13 – First day of session***
- ***Wednesday, March 5 – Deadline for bills to be passed out of House committees***
- ***Monday, March 10 – Deadline for bills to clear House fiscal committees***
- ***Wednesday, March 19 – Deadline for House passage of bills originating in the House***
- ***Friday, April 4 – Deadline for passage of Senate bills by House committees.***
- ***Monday, April 7 – Deadline to pass Senate bills out of House fiscal committees***
- ***Friday, April 18 – Deadline to pass all bills out of both the House and Senate (5 p.m.)***
- ***Sunday, April 27 – Session adjourns (sine die)***